

Message Text

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ACTION OC-05

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R 071030Z APR 75
FM AMCONSUL LENINGRAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1134
INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMCONSUL FRANKFURT

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EO 11652N/A
TAGS: PFOR, ACOM, UR, US
SUBJ: LENINGRAD AIRPORT EXCHANGE OF CLASSIFIED POUCHES

REFS: LENINGRAD 0018, LENINGRAD 0136, STATE 023183,
MOSCOW 03015

FRANKFURT FOR FRDCO

1. SUMMARY AND ACTION REQUESTED: LENINGRAD GETS LESS
THAN HALF A LOAF ON TRANSPORT OF POUCHES. ACTION REQUESTED:
REPORT FROM DEPT ON AIRLINE HANDLING OF SOV DIP COURIERS,
PARTICULARLY IN SAN FRANCISCO. END SUMMARY.

2. CONSUL GENERAL AND DPO AGAIN RAISED SUBJECT OF AIRPORT
EXCHANGES OF POUCHES WITH DIPLOMATIC AGENCY DURING CALL
APRIL 1 (OTHER SUBJECTS COVERED SEPTELS). DIP AGENCY CHIEF
REPEATED EARLIER ASSURANCES THAT SOVS WISHED BE AS FORTHCOMING
AS POSSIBLE IN MEETING OUR REQUESTS, AND THEREUPON CALLED
IN AEROFLOT DEPUTY MANAGER FOR INTERNATIONAL OPERATIONS IN
LENINGRAD. FOLLOWING DISCUSSION OUR REQUIREMENTS,
WE WERE PROMISED A "DEDICATED" BAGGAGE CART TO TAKE
POUCHES TO AND FROM PLANESIDE.

3. ON ARRIVAL AT AIRPORT APRIL 3, AEROFLOT SERVICE
REP INFORMED CONGEN PERSONNEL THAT "ORDERS HAD BEEN
RECEIVED THAT ALL DIPLOMATIC MAIL MUST BE WEIGHED
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AND ANY WEIGHT ABOVE BAGGAGE ALLOWANCE OF COURIERS

ABOARD PLANE FROM HELSINKI MUST BE PAID FOR-CASH-
ON THE SPOT." CONSOFFS NOTED THAT THIS WAS FIRST
TIME WE HAD HEARD OF NEW PROCEDURE. WHILE WE HAVE
NO OBJECTION IN PRINCIPLE TO WEIGHING BAGS AS AIRLINE
SHOULD KNOW HOW MUCH WEIGHT IS GOING ABOARD AIRCRAFT,
WE DO RATHER OBJECT TO HAVING NEW PROCEDURE SPRUNG
ON US WITH ZERO PRIOR NOTICE. (COMMENT: POUCHES
HAVE PREVIOUSLY BEEN LOADED WITHOUT WEIGHING HERE AND
CARRIER, FINNAIR, HAS COLLECTED FOR OVERWEIGHT AT
HELSINKI). CONSOFF CONFIRMED IN SUBSEQUENT PLANESIDE
CHAT WITH FINNAIR STATION MANAGER THAT NEW REQUIREMENT
DID NOT ORIGINATE WITH FINNAIR AND WAS AS MUCH NEWS
TO HIM AS TO US. HE HAD ALWAYS ESTIMATED WEIGHT OF
BAGS AND SO ENTERED THEM ON MANIFEST. FINNAIR WAS
PERFECTLY HAPPY WITH OLD PROCEDURE.

4. BAGS WEIGHED, IN THIS CASE WELL WITHIN BAGGAGE
ALLOWANCE, CONGEN PERSONNEL PROCEEDED TO USUAL
AREA TO AWAIT TRANSPORT TO AIRCRAFT ON ITS ARRIVAL.
AND WHAT TO THEIR WONDERING EYES SHOULD APPEAR BUT A
BAGGAGE CART, COMPLETE WITH DRIVER, AND ABOVE-
MENTIONED DEPUTY MANAGER, AND HIS DEPUTY, AND TWO
AEROFLOT SERVICE REPS. CONGEN PERSONNEL RAISED QUESTION OF
WEIGHT CHARGES WITH THIS BRASS, ONLY TO MEET STONE
WALL BASED ON "INTERNATIONAL AIR SAFETY REGULATIONS
REQUIRE ALL BAGGAGE BAGGAGE BE WEIGHED AND RECORDED ON MANIFEST."
FINNAIR STATION MANAGER POINTED OUT FINNAIR SATISFIED
THAT WEIGHT OF POUCHES ON AIRCRAFT POSED NO SAFETY
THREAT, "BUT (AEROFLOT) WOULD ABVIOUSLY DO WHAT IT
WANTED TO."

5. WITH THE AIRCRAFT ON FINAL APPROACH, CONGEN PERSONNEL
PREPARED TO ACCOMPANY POUCHES ON BAGGAGE CART, ONLY
TO BE TOLD THAT NOT MORE THAN ONE PERSON OTHER THAN
DRIVER COULD RIDE ON CART AS ONLY TWO SEATS ON VEHICLE:
REMAINING PERSON COULD RIDE BUS. IN EVENT, REMAINING
PERSON HOOFOED IT AS BUS PULLED AWAY WHILE HE ARGUING
POINT.6. THE REMAINDER OF THE EXCHANGE WENT REASONABLY
SMOOTHLY, WITH INCOMING POUCHES DELIVERED DIRECTLY TO
CONGEN VEHICLE AT TERMINAL.
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7. COMMENT: LEAVING ASIDE FOR THE MOMENT THE PROBLEM
OF PAYMENT FOR OVERWEIGHT (WHICH WE WILL PURSUE WITH
FINNAIR AND AEROFLOT IN THE FIRST INSTANCE), THERE
REMAINS THE PROBLEM OF TRANSPORT TO AND FROM THE
AIRCRAFT. ONE ESCORT ABOARD CART AND OTHER ABOARD
BUS IS RIDICULOUS AND, WHILE OPEN CART MAY BE
MARGINALLY ACCEPTABLE IN PLEASANT WEATHER, USE IN

INCLEMENT WEATHER WILL UNDOUBTEDLY RESULT IN WORKMAN'S
COMPENSATION CLAIMS FOR FROSTBITE AND/OR PARTIAL
DROWNING. (FYI-WINTER WIND CHILL INDICES ON TARMAC
KNOWN TO REACH MINUS 40 AND 50 FAHRENHEIT.) WE STILL
BELIEVE, THEREFORE, CLOSED VEHICLE A MUST, AND CONTINUE
TO HOPE DEPT/EMBASSY EFFORTS WILL GAIN FOR US PERMISSION
USE CONGEN VEHICLE, OR AT LEAST A CLOSED AIRPORT VEHICLE.

8. ACTION REQUESTED: WOULD APPRECIATE AT DEPARTMENT'S
EARLIEST CONVENIENCE DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF AIRLINE
HANDLING OF SOV DIP COURIERS, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE
TO SAN FRANCISCO PRACTICE. (WE RECALL MEMCON REPORTING
SOVS BEING TAKEN TO AIRCRAFT IN AIRLINE CAR.)
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